United Nations E/CN.3/2012/20

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2011

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-third session
28 February-2 March 2012
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: gender statistics

Follow-up to the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission on statistical indicators for measuring violence against women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Friends of the Chair group on statistical indicators for measuring violence against women submitted its first report to the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session in 2009 (E/CN.3/2009/13). Subsequently, the Statistical Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division to initiate and conduct work on developing a set of guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women that would provide full methodological guidance regarding the selection of core and additional topics, sources of data, relevant statistical classifications, outputs, wording of the questions and all other pertinent issues for statistical surveys on measuring violence against women. The Statistics Division, in compliance with that request, developed the draft guidelines. The present report presents the proceedings and conclusions of the consultative meeting to review the draft guidelines, held in Beirut from 8 to 10 November 2011, as well as the outline of the guidelines themselves.

* E/CN.3/2012/1.

11-62183 (E) 211211

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1. In its resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, a set of possible indicators on violence against women in order to assist Member States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women. To that end, the Friends of the Chair group was established by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-ninth session (see E/2008/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 39/116) and the membership was subsequently expanded in accordance with the instructions of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission. The group consists of representatives of 15 Member States (Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Mexico (the chair), Thailand, Turkey, and the United States of America), with the United Nations Statistics Division acting as secretariat. In addition, the following United Nations entities agreed to act as observers: Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat (now part of UN-Women), Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and World Health Organization.

2. The Friends of the Chair presented its first report to the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session for discussion (E/CN.3/2009/13). The Commission adopted the proposed set of indicators presented in the report as an interim set and first step, and requested the Friends of the Chair to continue the work on finalization of the indicators (E/2009/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 40/110).

3. Complying with the Commission's request, the Friends of the Chair conducted a meeting, co-organized by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía de México (reflecting Mexico's role as chair of the Friends of the Chair) and the United Nations Statistics Division, in Aguascalientes, Mexico, from 9 to 11 December 2009.[1] The major conclusions of the meeting refer to the finalization of the set of core statistical indicators for measuring violence against women using statistical surveys and the development of guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women.

4. In response to the request from the Friends of the Chair, the United Nations Statistics Division undertook the preparation of the draft guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women. The draft guidelines were designed to provide comprehensive methodological guidance on the selection of topics, sources of data, relevant statistical classifications, outputs, wording of the questions and all other relevant issues related to conducting statistical surveys to measure violence against women. The draft consists of six chapters: (a) role of statistical surveys on violence against women; (b) concepts and definitions of violence against women; (c) planning a statistical survey on violence against women; (d) questionnaire design; (e) survey implementation; and (f) data processing and analysis. In addition, the draft contains several annexes, including one (annex III) that presents

[1] The report of the meeting (ESA/STAT/AC.193/L.3) is available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/docs/finalreport.pdf.

recommended tabulations based on the set of statistical indicators developed by the Friends of the Chair and endorsed by the Statistical Commission.

5. For the purposes of ensuring a comprehensive first review of the draft guidelines, the Statistics Division organized a consultative meeting at the premises of ESCWA in Beirut from 8 to 10 November 2011. The meeting was attended by seven members of the Friends of the Chair: Mexico (chair), Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ghana, Italy and Turkey. Armenia, Kenya and Oman also participated, as well as ECE, ESCWA and the newly established UN-Women.

6. The format of the meeting was designed to allow for a detailed review of the draft guidelines. Each of the seven sessions — focusing on individual chapters and annex III — was opened by an introductory statement, followed by a presentation by a lead discussant, a general discussion and a section-by-section review of the draft text.

7. The comprehensive report of the meeting is available as a background document of the Statistical Commission. The major points agreed upon during the meeting can be summarized as follows:

(a) The draft text of the guidelines was assessed to be sound and comprehensive and in line with the needs of countries that would benefit from guidelines on measuring violence against women. The guidelines are being developed in the context of the work of the Friends of the Chair and are based on the existing and adopted list of statistical indicators for measuring violence against women. The work on the guidelines was coordinated with the work on developing a statistical module under the auspices of the regional commissions project on eradicating violence against women,[2] a project that was also guided by the Friends of the Chair;

(b) Comments and suggestions raised during the meeting can be grouped in several categories: (i) requests for reorganization of the structure of several chapters and repositioning of sections within a specific chapter; (ii) requests that the guidelines be more specific in terms of addressing surveys on violence against women, avoiding general instructions that may not be applicable in this specific case (such as, for example, the use of hot-deck editing); (iii) removing the phrasing of the questions from the body of the text and placing it in the annex, in the form of a model questionnaire; (iv) using the module developed by the regional commissions project as a model questionnaire; (v) limiting the recommended tabulations to the ones that satisfy the indicators as adopted by the Friends of the Chair; and (vi) specific comments on the draft text.

8. With regard to the recommended tabulations to be included in the guidelines, the meeting concluded that they should be limited to those that would allow for generation of the indicators adopted by the Friends of the Chair, namely:

(a) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to physical violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency;

[2] The description of the project is available at www.un.org/regionalcommissions/rcwomen.html.

(b) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to physical violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency;

(c) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency;

(d) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency;

(e) Total and age-specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by frequency;

(f) Total and age-specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner during lifetime by frequency;

(g) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to psychological violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner;

(h) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to economic violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner;

(i) Total and age-specific rate of women subjected to female genital mutilation.

For the computation of the appropriate prevalence rates in the recommended tabulations, the meeting emphasized that the denominator for indicators (a) to (d) and (i) should be the total number of women age 15 and above, and for indicators (e) to (h) the total number of ever-partnered women.

9. The completion of the work on the guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women will require the incorporation of all the inputs from the consultative meeting, which is expected to be accomplished by the end of January 2012. This will be followed by the final round of virtual review by all members and observers of the Friends of the Chair group as well as other participants in the consultative meeting, after which the draft will be submitted for formal editing and printing.